

# Integrating the Monorail

# Ballard draft

## **DRAFT**

PLANNING  
BACKGROUND  
REPORT

JULY 2003



City of Seattle

# Ballard Overview



In November 2002, Seattle voters approved creation of a new public agency, the Seattle Monorail Project, to plan, design and build a 14-mile monorail system commonly known as the Green Line. The City of Seattle has initiated a station area planning program - *Integrating the Monorail* - to make the most of the opportunities presented by the Green Line and encourage the best fit between the monorail and its neighborhood setting.

This planning background report for *Integrating the Monorail: Ballard* summarizes existing plans and conditions in the Ballard segment of the Green Line corridor. Planning background reports for each of the Green Line corridor segments, as well as an overview of the City's station area planning program, are also available (see <http://www.seattle.gov/monorail>).

Ballard is the northernmost segment of the Green Line. The Green Line will cross the Ship Canal on a bridge structure designed to the Coast Guard's 125' clearance, and then run along 15th Avenue NW, which is a major route for both general traffic and freight. At some point in the future, the Green Line would ideally extend further north and east to Northgate.

The segment includes three stations - Market Street and 15th Avenue; NW 65th Street and 15th Avenue NW; and NW 85th Street and 15th Avenue NW in Crown Hill. The area along the Ship Canal is part of the Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing Industrial Center. The remainder of the segment lies within the Crown Hill Ballard Neighborhood Plan, which includes the Ballard Hub Urban Village and the Crown Hill Residential Urban Village.

## Historic and Cultural Resources

The Ballard Historic District lies a few blocks west of the alignment near the 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and Market Street station. Historic Ballard has a wide variety of businesses, and is a home to cultural centers, galleries and nightlife.

The Ship Canal is a historic center for maritime businesses and activities, including the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks.

The NW 65<sup>th</sup> Street station serves Ballard High School, the swimming pool and adjacent recreation facilities.





## ||||| Neighborhood Plan Summary

### Neighborhood Vision and Goals

The Crown Hill/Ballard Neighborhood Plan envisions vital, accessible mixed-use core areas with residential and commercial activity in the Ballard Hub Urban Village and Crown Hill Residential Urban Village.

The plan emphasizes a desire to accommodate the majority of new housing units and increased density in the core areas (centered at 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Market Street in Ballard and 85<sup>th</sup> Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Crown Hill), while maintaining the physical character of the single family-zoned areas outside the core.

From a transportation perspective, the neighborhood plan calls for improved multi-modal mobility to support the desired development pattern within the neighborhood centers, including better east-west transit, but also emphasizes a desire to preserve the function of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW as a principal arterial and a major truck street.

The plan recognizes that 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW is a barrier between the neighborhood areas to the east and west from each other, and seeks to overcome this barrier and improve the visual character of the street.

### Key Activities and Current Issues

**Ballard Civic Center:** The Ballard Civic Center has been defined in a Master Plan including a new 1.5 acre civic park, a new branch of the Seattle Public Library in a signature structure also housing a new Neighborhood Service Center, and a safer, more pedestrian friendly streetscape. It is located just west of the 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and Market Street station area near 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NW and NW 56<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Bergen Place Park:** Improvements have been designed for Bergen Place Park, which is located at the intersection of NW Market Street, Leary Way NW and 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NW, just south of the Ballard Civic Center in the heart of the Ballard Business District. Construction is slated for Fall 2003.

**Ballard Gateway Project:** Design, fabrication and installation of eight lighted art sculptures on the Ballard Bridge approach on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, crossing Leary Way NW.

**15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW Visioning Project:** An array of improvements for 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW from NW 65<sup>th</sup> Street to Holman Road has been proposed by the community to create a safer, more pleasant pedestrian environment, improve pedestrian crossings and better link surrounding communities, strengthen the relationship between 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW businesses and the surrounding neighborhoods, and improve the environment for transit riders. Their report, "Envision 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW," is being reviewed by the City.

## ||||| Transportation

### Overview

15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW plays a very important role as one of the few north-south arterials west of I-5 that links Ballard and other Northwest Seattle neighborhoods to downtown Seattle and regional destinations.

Pedestrian and bicycle travel along and across 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW is difficult, particularly during peak commute times when portions of the corridor's parking lanes operate as travel lanes.

The Burke-Gilman Trail provides excellent southerly east-west bicycle and pedestrian connections between Ballard and the University District and beyond.

Residential streets north of NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street typically lack sidewalks.

On-street parking is generally without parking meters except for downtown Ballard, although there are posted time restrictions in the commercial areas along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and most east-west arterial streets. Peak-period restrictions limit parking on principal arterials and at key arterial intersections.



## Vehicular Circulation

Vehicular circulation in the Ballard segment is provided primarily on a limited number of arterials that serve simultaneously as principal arterials for general purpose traffic, truck routes and transit routes. These arterial streets are widely separated, with local streets through single-family neighborhoods between the primary circulation routes.

Proposed station locations in the Ballard segment are typically located at or near the intersection of these primary vehicular routes.

Local business access along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW is provided by a two-way center left-turn lane through much of the corridor.

NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street features two travel lanes in each direction, without queuing lanes for turning movements. Relatively small traffic volumes, therefore, can cause delay and create a nuisance factor for travelers seeking movement through the corridor, increasing the perceived congestion in the corridor.

NW Market Street features two travel lanes in each direction with two left-turn lanes onto 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and restricted on-street parking at the intersection to provide queuing space for right-turning vehicles. This principal arterial also carries Metro Route 44 from Ballard to the U-District.



Traffic flow in Ballard





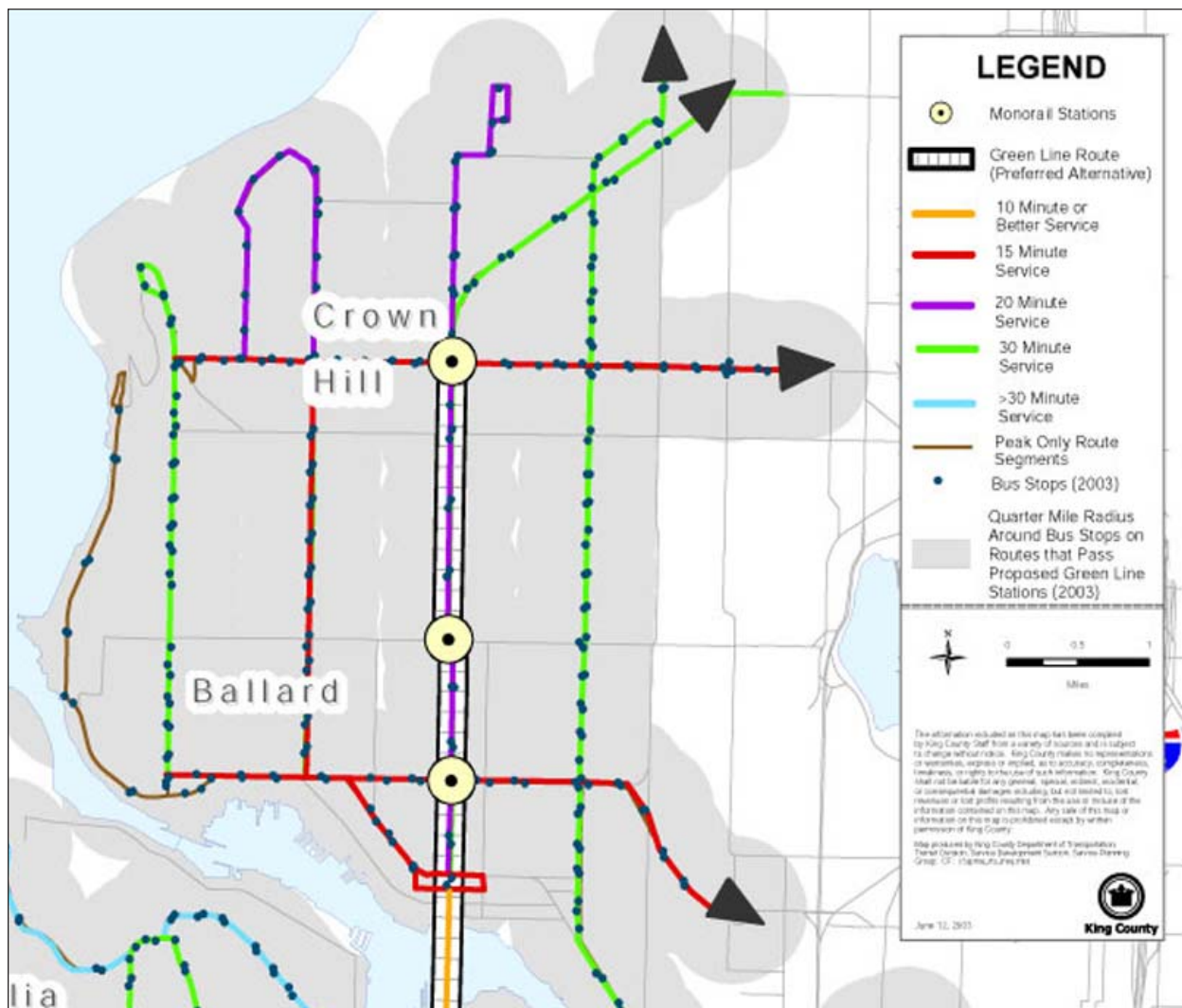
## Transit Service

Ballard and Crown Hill are served by nine Metro transit routes. Transit ridership for area residents commuting to work is almost twice that of the city-wide average, based on year 2000 Census data, and the drive alone rate is about 10% lower than the city-wide average.

Service is concentrated in four north-south corridors spaced about a half-mile apart (along 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NW) and two east-west corridors (NW Market Street and NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street). Generally, peak service operates with 10-12 minute frequencies; off-peak service operates with 20-30 minute (or more) frequencies.

As with many city neighborhoods, local residents support more frequent and/or broader transit coverage in their area, particularly east-west routes and off-peak service, with the overall goal of more convenient transit service.

Bus stops are typically "in-lane," where buses stop in the outermost travel lane. In-lane bus stops are advantageous for transit efficiency, as no weaving movement is required to resume travel after passenger loading. General purpose traffic in the lane must stop with the buses, creating some driver frustration and the potential for negative impacts on traffic capacity and efficiency if bus volumes and loading times increase significantly.



Transit service in Ballard



## Pedestrian Environment

South of NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street, sidewalks are provided throughout the Ballard station areas. Sidewalk widths vary along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, ranging from 8 feet to 18 feet (sidewalk and planting strip). Through much of the corridor, inconsistent street tree/street furniture zones, paved planting strip, and peak-period parking restrictions detract from the pedestrian experience. Surface parking lots adjacent to sidewalks on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW further diminish the pedestrian environment, particularly in the vicinities of NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street and NW Market Street.

Sidewalks have not been provided in residential areas north of NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street; SDOT has a sidewalk inventory documenting the presence or absence of sidewalks.

NW Market Street west of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW provides wide sidewalks, well-defined buffer zones and consistent building faces, creating a high quality pedestrian environment toward downtown historic Ballard.

Many pedestrian crossings at key pedestrian desire lines (such as Ballard High School) are difficult, with inadequate waiting areas at intersections, short pedestrian walk cycles, and signal timing arrangements that compel pedestrians to activate pedestrian walk signals with pedestrian push buttons.



## Bicycle Network

Bicycle commuters to downtown Seattle typically use residential and arterial streets parallel to 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, such as 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, and the bike lane on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, to get to and from Ballard, the Burke-Gilman Trail, and downtown Seattle. Narrow sidewalks on the Ballard Bridge provide a tight crossing of the Ship Canal.

As a designated Urban Trail, NW 77<sup>th</sup> Street provides the best northerly east-west bicycle connection between Sunset Hill Park and the Green Lake Trail, compared to nearby arterial streets, because of the signalized intersections at major crossings. The intersection at 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW will likely be improved with a pedestrian-activated signal as part of the upcoming SDOT 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW multi-modal transportation project. That project will also likely include transit signal priority and vehicle safety and mobility improvements.

The Burke-Gilman Trail provides excellent southerly east-west bicycle and pedestrian connections between Ballard and the University District and beyond. The City plans to expand the Burke-Gilman Trail on the west side of downtown Ballard to Golden Gardens Park, via the Ballard Locks, in 2003-2004.

The City recently approved a plan to “complete the missing link” just south of the proposed Market Street station between 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and the Ballard Locks. The off-street trail would run along NW 45<sup>th</sup> Street/Shilshole Avenue NW under 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW.

There are a limited amount of bicycle racks installed on arterial streets as part of the City’s bicycle rack program in the Ballard and Crown Hill neighborhood commercial districts. Ballard High School provides bicycle parking for students, and has plans and some funding to provide a covered bicycle parking area.



Bicycle trails through the Ballard area

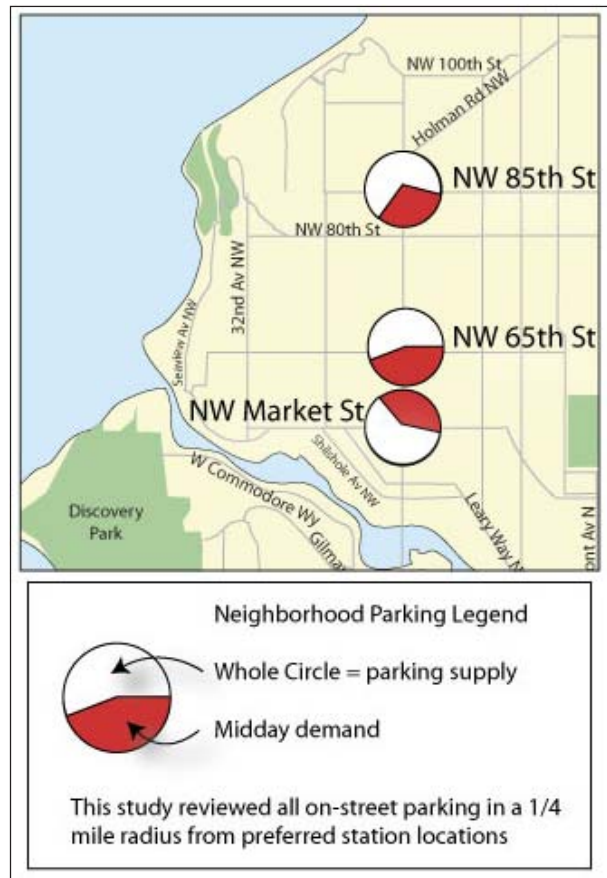
## Parking

On-street parking at Ballard segment station areas is free and typically unrestricted, although the commercial areas along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW have posted time restrictions, and downtown Ballard has parking meters. The City of Seattle Comprehensive Neighborhood Parking Study, conducted in 2000, found that parkers in the Ballard and Crown Hill neighborhoods do have on-street and off-street parking available to them during a typical weekday at no-to low-cost within three blocks of their destination.

On 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and NW 85<sup>th</sup> Street (east of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW), on-street parking is prohibited in the peak travel direction during morning and evening peak travel times.

In regards to off-street parking, most non-residential development provides on-site parking. In residential areas around the stations, residents are more likely to use on-street parking more in the Ballard area versus around the Crown Hill station area, due to the lack of driveways or prevalence of older apartment buildings built before on-site parking was required.

For non-residential zones typically found in the Ballard segment, parking in Neighborhood Commercial zoning is required to be located at the rear or side of a building, and built within the structure or off-site. Parking between a building and a street is usually not allowed. Access may be from the front or a side street, or from the alley if feasible; subject to curbcut standards. Depending on the land use, a typical 4,000 square foot retail development would require about 4 parking spaces. In Commercial zones, the location and access of parking is generally unrestricted, and minimum parking requirements are generally the same as in Neighborhood Commercial zones.



On-street parking in Ballard